

# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## Famous people and me! student worksheet

What makes a person famous?

Write a list of the four most important reasons that make a person famous.

This task will help you to make good use of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and find some of the many ways you can learn about people in the past.

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Log on to the Oxford DNB. Click on the blue link: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/subscribed>. If you have access by username and password, you will be prompted to type them.

Find people from the Oxford DNB who:

- Share your surname [*Put your surname in the box at the top right of the screen. Click Go. Select a person from your list of hits. If you get no hit for your name choose another.*]
  - What is his/her full name?
  - What was his/her occupation or job or activity?
- Share your birthday [*In people search choose birth as event and type in day/month but NOT year.*]
  - What is his/her full name?
  - In what year was he/she born?
  - Where was he/she born?
- Died in the year you were born and have a picture [*Clear your last search! Choose death as event and type in the correct year, select illustrated only.*]
  - What is his/her full name?
  - For what is he/she well known?
  - Is the picture a photograph, a painting, or some other image?
- Come from the same area as you [*Clear last search! Choose birth or residence as event and type your town or county in place.*]
  - What is his/her full name?
  - What is his/her connection with your area?
  - Did he/she live anywhere else?

## Tips

- You can arrange a list of people in alphabetical, birth date, or death date order (see left-hand pane of results lists page). This may help you spot the people who look most interesting to you.
  - If your first search gets no hit try something different.
  - You can spot articles on the list with pictures because they have a little icon of a portrait.
  - Once you've finished, try using the other search options—and your imagination.
  - Remember: the Oxford DNB includes people born outside Britain who became famous here and British people famous abroad.
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## Extension

### Class discussion

- 1 From your searches: what sorts of people are remembered in the past? Why are some historical people famous and known to us?
- 2 What are the similarities and differences between being famous today and being famous in the past?
- 3 Your searches will have shown that not all details are known about a person in the past (for example we don't always know when they were born or where they lived): why do we not know everything about historical people, even if they are famous?
- 4 The Oxford DNB includes some of the men and women historians know about. But there are far more people in the past we have forgotten about. Why do some historical people become famous and some not?